

Angel DeCora

Angel DeCora was born Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka (Fleecy Cloud Floating in Space) on May 3, 1871 on the Winnebago Reservation in modern-Thurston County, Nebraska. Her grandfather, Little DeCora, was the chief of the Winnebago tribe until his death in 1887. Both of her parents also died in the late 1880s. When she was 12, she was forced to leave the reservation and was sent to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia. It was during her years there that DeCora discovered her interest in art. After five years, she was sent back to Nebraska, but returned to the Institute in 1888 and graduated in 1891. In 1892, began studying art at Smith College, where she earned her tuition as custodian of the Smith Museum. It was during this time that she was introduced to the works of Dwight Tryon who influenced much of her later work. In 1896, DeCora went to the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia where she was educated on the art of illustrations. While during most of her education she was told to reject her “Indian-ness,” one of her teachers at Drexel, Howard Pyle, encouraged DeCora to embrace her culture and incorporate it in her work. Several of her illustrations were published in *Harper’s Magazine*. In 1899, she moved to Boston to continue her studies in art. All of DeCora’s works feature Native American life as their subject matter. In 1906, she became a teacher at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. In 1915, she left the school to devote herself full-time to her art. However, in 1919, she died of influenza and pneumonia.



Primary Source

Angel DeCora: An Autobiography by Angel DeCora

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<https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/publications/NH1976DeCora.pdf>